AN
ESSAY
ON THE
EXCELLENCIES
OF
Christian Revelation.

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To the REVEREND

JOHN KING, D.D.

ARCH-DEACON

OF

COLCHESTER,

MASTER

OF THE

CHARTER-HOUSE,

AND

CHAPLAIN

To the Right HONOURABLE the

Lord HIGH-CHANCELLOR

of *GREAT-BRITAIN*.

THIS

ESSAY

Is dedicated by the AUTHOR,

With the utmoſt HUMILITY

And GRATITUDE.

To the Reverend

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Is dedicated by the AUTHOR,

With the most humble

and grateful Veneration,

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ON THE

Excellencies *of* Chriſtian Revelation.

AS it is common and natural for a Man to appear in Behalf of what he approves; it is thought, this Eſſay will be no great Treſpaſs on the Public, which has been of late obliged with ſeveral Attempts of this Kind.

The Deſign of this Eſſay is, to ſhew the Excellency of Chriſtianity, and the Truth of its Revelation: And (as it is

publiſhed in Favour of the beſt and moſt good natured Religion, that was ever inſtituted) Care has been taken to avoid whatever ſavours of ill Nature and Paſſion, by keeping it free from all ungenerous Inſinuations and perſonal Invectives againſt thoſe that differ from the Author's Sentiments. A Part of the Treatiſe is founded on the Scriptures; and the Whole is conſonant to the public Doctrines of the Clergy and the Biſhop of *London*[a] in particular, whoſe natural Inclinations and acquired Abilities, Piety and Learning, raiſe both Him and them above all juſt Reproach, Contempt and Malice. But, laying aſide all Apologies and Encomiums, let the Eſſay ſpeak for it ſelf; and conſider in the firſt Place,

1*ſt.* Some of the many *Excellencies* peculiar to the *Chriſtian Religion.*

1. The firſt Excellency of the *Chriſtian Religion* conſiſts in that, it gives Men proper Ideas of God, which is the avowed Baſis, or Foundation, of all Religion; and preſcribes ſuch Sort of Wor-

[a] Paſtoral Care.

ſhip,

ſhip, as tends moſt effectually to God's Glory and Man's Happineſs. *God is*, confeſſedly, *a Spirit; and they that worſhip him, muſt worſhip him*[b] in Purity and Sincerity of Mind. Chriſtianity hath offered to Mens View a moſt perfect, lovely and awful Repreſentation of God in his Attributes; it[c] repreſents him, as a Being of infinite Power and Wiſdom, Truth and Juſtice, Mercy and Goodneſs: And theſe Attributes do ſo neceſſarily, or eſſentially, unite in God, that there could be no ſuch Thing as a God, without the Agreement or Concurrence of the Whole[d]. Chriſtianity has given an Account of God ſo exquiſitely fine, amiable and glorious, as fills every unprejudiced Perſon with Wonder and Surprize, Reverence and Delight, Love and Obedience: Like a finiſhed Piece of Painting, it nobly feaſts the Mind, wins the Affections, and makes the Beholder approve what he contemplates. As Chriſtianity gives us a Repreſentation

[b] John iv. 24.

[c] Mat. xix. 26. Heb. iv. 13. 2 Theſ. i. 6. Luke xviii. 19.

[d] *See* Duty of Man. *Sunday* 1. Sec. 12.

of

of God in his Attributes, ſo likewiſe in the next Place,

2. It diſplays the Nobleneſs of Man's Deſcent, the Dignity of his Nature, and the Happineſs or Miſery he is capable of, both here and hereafter, according to the Care that he takes of himſelf. Man is the Workmanſhip of God, and Sovereign of the Creation; he is happily a Subject and a Prince, at the ſame Time; being wholly inferior to God, and ſuperior to his Fellow-Creatures, in Dignity, Office and Power. Man fills the middle Space betwixt the animal and intellectual World; and is nearly, very nearly, related to the nobleſt and vileſt of finite Beings, Angels and Reptiles. Man is a nice Compound of two Parts, Body and Soul. The Body and Soul are diſtinct Subſtances; the One is material and mortal, the Other immaterial and immortal. Though the Body and Soul be diſtinct Subſtances; yet both meet and conſtitute one Man; and though they be linked together in one, their Properties are viſibly and plainly diſtinct and unconfuſed. But though Arguments [c] taken from Reaſon,

[c] *See* Nelſon's *Feſt. and Faſts*, p. 188, &c.

from

from the Notions of a God, from the eſſential Difference betwixt Good and Evil, and from the natural Fears and Hopes of Men, might perſuade, nay compel, us to conclude, that the Soul is immortal; yet the thorough Belief, the full Aſſurance of it, can be found no where, but in *Revelation*. Hiſtory ſhews how much this great and uſeful Point had been conteſted amongſt the ancient, learned and inquiſitive, Philoſophers; but was not rightly ſettled, till Chriſtianity appeared, which *brought Life and Immortality to light, through the Goſpel*[f]. Chriſtianity not only teaches the Immortality of the Soul; it has not only made the Truth of it probable from Chriſt's Reſurrection from the Dead; but hath laid down ſuch plain and eaſy Rules, as will, being duely obſerved, naturally contribute to its inexpreſſible, eternal, Felicity in that State of Exiſtence.

3. But, that Man's high Birth, Prerogatives and Titles, may not tempt him to exceed thoſe Bounds which God has ſet him; Chriſtianity enjoins him,

[f] 2 Tim. i. 10.

up-

upon the moſt reaſonable Terms, to ſubmit himſelf wholly to the good Pleaſure of God [g], becauſe he depends on Him alone for preſent Bleſſings and future Happineſs; and to *be content with ſuch Things as he hath* [h], in as much as the bounteous Hand, which gave, can take away. No human Patience would bear the Inſolence of a Beggar, who ſhould quarrel at our Alms, and revile our Beneficence, becauſe not equal to his Deſires: And how can Man expect that God ſhould be pleaſed with him, who is diſſatisfied, becauſe his Fortune, or Quality, is not ſo great as his Wiſhes? He, that is ſo diſcontented, may, with the ſame Reaſon, repine, becauſe he was not made a Star in the Firmament, or an Angel in Heaven. Beſides, that Man may not judge more worthily of himſelf than he ought; Chriſtianity ſets in his View the Defects and Infirmities of his Nature, and by ſuch Means invites and perſuades him to maintain a lively Senſe of his own Deficiencies and Imperfections, in Reſpect of the divine, tranſcendant,

[g] 1 Pet. v. 5, 6, 7.
[h] Heb. xiii. 5.

Ex-

Excellencies and Perfections. Humility and Contentedneſs of Mind, Reſignation to, and Reliance upon, the Will of God for ſecular and eternal Happineſs; is the Foundation of all Religion and Virtue. Thoſe diſtinguiſhing Virtues and ennobling Perfections of Mind are more accurately deſcribed, more rationally taught and more ſtrongly recommended, in the Chriſtian Religion, than in all the voluminous Eſſays of moral Philoſophers.

If a Man ſhould reflect on thoſe other *Precepts*, which require of him Temperance and Abſtinence, Continence and Chaſtity, Readineſs and Perſeverance in religious Acts [i]; he will preſently ſee How reaſonable, equitable, praiſe-worthy and practicable, they are. Nay, ſo admirably well are thoſe *Precepts* of Duty, which concern a Man *propriâ Perſonâ*, adapted to his Capacity; and ſo naturally do they tend to his Reputation, Honour and Advantage, that the bare Practice of them would be no ſmall Felicity, if there were no ſuch Things, as future Rewards

[i] Rom. xiii. 13. Luke xxi. 34. Eph. iv. 29. Mat. vi. 18. 1 Cor. vi. 18. Eph. v. 5. 1 Theſſ. iv. 7.

and Puniſhments, Heaven and Hell. Or if a Man ſhould turn his Reflections from thoſe Virtues, which concern himſelf, to conſider the Nature and Uſe of thoſe,

4. Which the Chriſtian Religion enjoins him to obſerve and cultivate, as a Member of Society: I dare ſay, he ſhall no where meet with any more beneficial, nor delightful in their Nature; none more conformable to the beſt Reaſon and moſt refined Taſte of Mankind; nor any ſo effectual to procure and eſtabliſh the Welfare and Happineſs of all, and the Peace and Quiet of each Individual. So fitly are the ſeveral and various *Precepts* of Chriſtianity, concerning Juſtice and Honeſty, Love and Charity, Unity and Peace, Obedience and Subjection [k] to Superiors Eccleſiaſtical and Civil, ſuited to the Capacities and Abilities of Men, that they cannot, but muſt approve themſelves to every One's Judgment and Practice; unleſs where the contrary Vices are invincibly predominant over Reaſon, Intereſt and

[k] Rom. xiii. 7. 1 Theſſ. iv. 6. James ii. 8. 1 John iii. 17. Eph. iv. Acts xxiii. 5. 1 Pet. ii. 13, 14. 1 Tim. v. Heb. xiii. 7.

Duty.

Duty. There is no one Precept of Chriſtianity concerning ſocial Virtue, but what carries Reaſon and Self-evidence along with it, needing no other, nor higher Recommendation, than its native Purity and Plainneſs. Chriſt's Sermon on the Mount [1] is a glorious, perfect and admirable, Syſtem of Morality and Piety; its Style is ſuited, with the greateſt Propriety and Elegance, to the Dignity of the Subject; and its Doctrines are ſo pure, ſo rational and ſo convincing, that nothing leſs could be expected from them, than a general Influence upon the Lives and Actions of Men. This one Sermon begets more real Religion and true Virtue, than all the moral Writings of the ancient Philoſophers; it far exceeds all *Phariſaic* Wiſdom and Sanctity, and the highly extolled Virtues of the *Heathen* Sages and Heroes. But,

5. The *Chriſtian Religion* does not only lay down Rules for the Conduct of religious and civil Life; but puts Men under the deepeſt and moſt inviting Obligations to obſerve them, from a

[1] Mat. v. 6, 7.

Senſe of Duty to God and the Expectation of a future Account: When every Man ſhall infallibly receive Praiſe or Blame, Reward or Puniſhment [m] agreeable to the Nature or Quality of his Thoughts, Words and Actions. Other Religions, the *Pagan* and *Jewiſh*, were ſomewhat imperfect and defective in this neceſſary Point; they aſſerted the Obligations to religious and moral Duties; but did not completely repreſent the Means requiſite to the Performance, nor the dreadful Evils conſequent to Neglect. Nor were the Rewards propoſed in thoſe Inſtitutions, ſuch as the Nature and Reaſon of Things require; but only ſenſual and fleeting, which are acknowledg'd very inſufficient, feeble, Motives for Men to oppoſe the Dangers and Difficulties, which they unavoidably meet with in the Purſuits of Piety and Virtue: But, on the contrary, *Chriſtianity* no ſooner ſhews Men their Duty, but it quickens and rouzes them to Action; without which all Precepts would prove well nigh, if not wholly, inefficacious. *Chriſtianity* illuminates the Underſtandings of Men,

[m] 2 Cor. v. 10.

and

and fortifies their Minds with Courage under the moſt preſſing Neceſſities and imminent Dangers: *It* alarms their Fears with the Threats of eternal Miſery, and encourages them to do what is Good, with the Promiſes of infinite Happineſs in the World to come; and to keep them from Deſpair, [n] it aſſures them of Pardon for Sin and Reconciliation to God, through the Merits, Death and [o] Paſſion, of Chriſt, upon the eaſy Terms of a timely and ſincere Repentance. *Neither is there Salvation in any other: For there is none other Name under Heaven given among Men, whereby we muſt be ſaved* [p].

6. The *next* and *laſt* Excellency, which is inſiſted upon as peculiar to the *Chriſtian Religion*, is, that *it* teaches, with great Plainneſs and Perſpicuity, whatever is neceſſary [q] to be known, believ'd and practis'd, in Order to Salvation. *Chriſtianity*, therefore, is no [r] *Abſtruſe* Science; but obvious to the meaneſt, as well as the higheſt, Capacities:

[n] Eph. i. 7.
[o] Luke xxiv. 47. Luke xv.
[p] Acts iv. 12.
[q] Homily *on the Scriptures.* 2 Tim. iii. 15.
[r] *See* Toland's *Chriſtianity not myſterious.*

Though

Though, by the Way, it muſt be allow'd, that *School Divinity* hath horribly perplex'd its *native* Clearneſs, and *ſo* diſcouraged many from the neceſſary Study of it.

But however *intelligible* and *excellent* the Doctrines of Chriſtianity may appear in the Judgment of Mankind, CHRIST never intended *thereby* to ſuperſede the Induſtry of Men, nor to imprint Things violently upon the Will. For, on the contrary, Men are treated as *rational* Beings; they are commanded to *ſearch the Scriptures* [r]; the Truth is ſet before them in the beſt Light, and confirm'd with the weightieſt Teſtimonies; while the *Will* remains at full Liberty to receive, or reject, it. Chriſt indeed, when He inſtituted this Religion, might have required of Men an *immediate* Aſſent to the *Myſteries* and *Doctrines* thereof, without ſatisfying them about the Reaſonableneſs and Equity of Things. But alas! ſuch an arbitrary Command of Aſſent to any *Revelations*, without a previous Enquiry made into their *Veracity*, is *ſo* unreaſonable, that Chriſt wou'd

[r] John v. 39.

not

not infringe upon the Privileges of human Reaſon and Free-Will ſo far, as to expect any ſuch Thing from Men; *becauſe* the End of his *Miſſion* was (not to darken the [f] Underſtanding, nor to take away the Freedom of the Will, but) to illuminate the *One* and improve the *Other*.

To conclude this Part of the Eſſay; *Nothing* is diſcernible in the Chriſtian Religion, that is unworthy of God; *Nothing*, that is either repugnant to the Suggeſtions of *Natural* Light, or prejudicial to the *Temporal* Intereſt and *Future* Happineſs of Man. Nay, *ſuch* agreeable Lineaments of Beauty and Holineſs appear thro' the whole of Chriſtianity, that its Inſtitution and Original cannot but be owned both excellent and divine.

Theſe *Few* of the many Excellencies that might have been ſingled out, ſerve as ſo many Recommendations in Favour of the Chriſtian Religion. The next Thing, that comes under Conſideration, is,

[f] Mat. v. 17.

2dly,

2dly, *The Truth of the Chriſtian Revelation.* And, That this controverted Point may appear in a proper Light, it is *abſolutely* neceſſary to conſider theſe three Things.

1*ſt*, The *Period and Circumſtance of Time*, *when* this Revelation was made; 2*dly*, *The Things done*, in Confirmation of its Doctrines; and, 3*dly*, The *Writings* wherein theſe Things are recorded: Of each in their Order.

Every one, that has been converſant in antient Hiſtory, will, I believe, allow, that Chriſt entered upon his *Miniſterial* Office and founded his Religion, in the Reign of *Tiberius Cæſar*; an Age [t], *no leſs* famed for Sagacity and Learning, than remarkable for Idolatry and Licentiouſneſs. The Nobles and Men of Figure in that Age were *extreme* great Encouragers of Learning and Philoſophy, and the Students themſelves were *equally* as curious and indefatigable in the Search after Truth. The Students and Philoſophers of that Age, having been edu-

[t] *A. M.* 4034. *A. C.* 31. *R. E.* 30.

cated

cated in the Idolatries of their own Countries, were likewiſe prejudiced againſt *all* other Religions, and *more* eſpecially the Chriſtian. Theſe Perſons, *thus* educated, and *thus* byaſs'd in their Opinions, ſtood up zealouſly for their own Tenets, corrupt as they were; and examined the Doctrines of Chriſt with jealous Eyes. Wherefore, if they could have diſcovered any, the leaſt, Appearance of Falſhood and Impoſture, *Chriſtianity* muſt needs have met with *Univerſal* Abhorrence and Deteſtation. But the Providence and Goodneſs of God ſo ordered Things, that by *how much* the more nicely they ſearched into the Merits of this Religion, by *ſo much* the more conſpicuous its Beauty and Veracity appear'd: And what is *further* remarkable, *ſome* of thoſe very Men openly declared the Purity, Reaſonableneſs and Divinity, of its Doctrines; while *others*, from being its greateſt Enemies, became its warmeſt Friends and Advocates [v]. Thus the Wiſdom of God is accompliſhed by being oppoſed! Thus Man's Policy is defeated by thoſe very

[v] Juſtin Martyr, Athenagoras, Clemens, Alexandrinus, &c.

Means that were deſign'd to promote its Succeſs. But,

2*dly*, However *pure*, *rational*, *heavenly* and *divine*, the Chriſtian Religion might appear in its *own* Nature; yet *Nothing* could poſſibly recommend it *ſo* ſucceſsfully or effectually to the Reception of Mankind, *as* the working of Miracles. For the *Jews* and *Gentiles* regarded not the uſual and ordinary Means of Conviction; *Reaſon* and *Self-Evidence* being then, in their Conceits, very inſufficient Arguments to prove the Merits and Goodneſs of what they diſliked; *unleſs* (as Chriſt ſaid) they *ſaw Signs and Wonders*[w], they would (*i. e.* they were reſolv'd) *not to believe*: Wonders, *therefore*, were done, or Miracles were wrought, that their Obſtinacy and Prejudice might be *wholly* without Excuſe. And it is *obſervable*, that God never has Recourſe to Miracles, or ſupernatural Means, whilſt the ordinary and natural will be ſufficient; becauſe it is not agreeable to his Wiſdom, to inform the Underſtandings of Men in a ſupernatural Manner, before ſuch Sort of In-

[w] John iv. 48.

formation

formation becomes *abſolutely* neceſſary, or *highly* expedient.

Miracles are ſaid to be *Things, both in themſelves and Circumſtances, contrary to the known Laws of Nature; and*, conſequently, *produced by ſome Preternatural Power, and evident to Senſe.* Not to mention the divers Miracles of Chriſt; What could be more properly ſuch, than his *walking upon the Sea, and raiſing of the Dead*[x]? For to walk upon Water without ſinking, is contrary to the *Laws* or *Principles* of *Gravitation* of *Bodies*; and to reſtore a dead Carcaſs to its former wonted Life and Vigour, is what no *natural* or *human* Power, that we know of, was ever able to produce. Though *Miracles* are ſaid to be performed or effected by ſome *Preternatural* Power; yet they cannot, they muſt not, upon that Account, be ſaid to be always the *immediate* Effects of *Divine* Power. For *Credible* Hiſtory, as well *Human* as *Divine*, *Prophane* as *Sacred*, aſſures us of a Truth that Things, *circumſtantially* wonderful, and *wholly* unaccountable from Natural

[x] Matt. xiv. 25. Mark vi. 48. Luke viii. John xi.

Cauſes, have been effected by Men with the Aſſiſtance of Spirits: But they have been ſoon, or in Proceſs of Time, known from thoſe, done by the *immediate Power* of God. *For Inſtance:* The *Egyptian Magicians* wrought Miracles with their Enchantments, to confirm their vicious and idolatrous Practices [y]; but they were diſtinguiſh'd from thoſe done by *Moſes*, who acted by a quite different, ſuperior, Power. This naturally ſuggeſts to our Conſideration the ſeveral Ways by *which* Men may diſcover the Truth or Falſhood of a Miracle: but theſe two ſhall ſuffice. The *Firſt* is, To conſider whether the Miracle is evident to Senſe: For if it be not, *How can it be perceived? And, if no Change be made on the Object, the Miracle is loſt.* The *next* is, To reflect on the natural Tendency of the Things done, whether to good or bad Purpoſes. For, if the Things done tend to introduce and eſtabliſh irreligious and wicked Doctrines, we have the Aſſurance of our Reaſon, and of *Moſes*, that ſuch Things proceed not from God, and,

[y] Exod. vii. 11.

conſe-

conſequently, we are neither to regard, nor countenance them [z].

That *Chriſt* did work Miracles, according to the *Letter* of the *New Teſtament*, we have the united or joint Teſtimony of his Enemies. *Julian* and *Celſus* admitted this, though they urged that they proceeded from a Magick Power. But, not to inſiſt upon Chriſt's divine Miſſion and Authority, which is evident enough from the Nature of his Religion; his Miracles were Acts of *ſuch* a Kind and Nature, and *ſo* circumſtantiated, that Enemies and Friends publickly profeſs'd the Truth of them. Their being done in the Preſence of Enemies, makes it reaſonable to conclude, that they were *real* Facts, according to the *Letter* of *Scripture*; and not ſuch only in the Conceits of Men, as a *late Writer* frequently ſuggeſts. The Miracles, which were done at the *Paſſion* of Chriſt, did *ſo* convincingly affect the Judgment of the *Roman Centurion* [a], that he confeſs'd the Divinity of Chriſt, even when he was moſt humbled, ſuffering an ignominious, cruel, Death. That there was ſuch

[z] Deut. xiii. 2, 3.
[a] Mark xv. 39.

a Perſon, as *Chriſt*; and that he ſuffered in the *Manner* and about the *Time*, that the Scriptures aſſert; We have the concurring Teſtimony of *Jewiſh* and *Pagan* [b], as well as *Chriſtian*, Authors.

Before we conſider the Writings, wherein theſe Facts are recorded, it is but *juſt* to obſerve the publick doing of them, and their Deſign. Theſe Miracles were not wrought *ſeldom*, once or twice; but *frequently*, and upon all juſt Occaſions: They were not done *privately* in the Preſence of a few Friends; but *publickly*, before Crouds and Multitudes of People, Enemies as well as Friends, as they came without Diſtinction: They were not done, as the falſe Miracles of the *Papiſts* are, to ſurprize People; but to convince them of his Authority which they queſtioned, to relieve the Infirmities, and to cure the Diſeaſes, of the afflicted Sons of Men: And, thus, by a ſurprizing, noble, *Mixture*, they beſpake the Goodneſs and Power of God *in Chriſt*.

[b] Carol. Daubuz. pro Teſt. Joſeph. Tacitus, *lib.* 15. *Sect.* 9. Suetonius de Claudio, *cap.* 25. Plin. Jun. Ep. 97. *lib.* 10.——

Nor

Nor did Miracles expire upon the Croſs with Chriſt; but were performed by the *Apoſtles* after his Aſcenſion, and by their *Succeſſors*, till the World was well ſatisfy'd with their Reality, and a great Part of Mankind was converted to the *Chriſtian* Religion: And then, indeed, they ceaſed to be *abſolutely* neceſſary to the *Being* of the *Chriſtian Church*. But ſeeing the Tradition of theſe Matters of Fact is call'd in Queſtion, it is our *Province* to conſider in the next and laſt Place,

3*dly*, *The Scriptures in which they are recorded.*

The *Scriptures*, that ſet forth the *holy* Life and *miraculous* Deeds of Chriſt, were penn'd by Men, who had been his conſtant, inſeparable, *Aſſociates* about three Years and a half. They were Perſons of known *Sincerity* and avow'd *Honeſty*; and, therefore, cannot be ſuppos'd to report what was not Truth, or plain Matter of Fact: They laboured under *ſingular* Diſadvantages, Penury, Contempt and Hardſhip; and, as it is recorded to their eternal Honour, ſealed

their

their Reports in Blood; chearfully and willingly ſubmitting themſelves to the Cruelty of their Enemies. What, therefore, could it poſſibly be, that ſhould move them to give *ſuch* Teſtimony of Chriſt, againſt the *ſharp* and *fierce* Oppoſition of *Jewiſh* Malice and *Pagan* Power? Nothing leſs, undoubtedly, than a thorough Conviction of the Truth and Juſtice of the Cauſe, in which they were embarked, and a firm and well-grounded Expectation of a future Recompence in the World to come.

Though it hath been ſuggeſted *by a late Writer*, that Chriſt's Companions, the *Evangeliſts* and *Apoſtles*, might craftily conſpire to impoſe a Falſhood upon Poſterity, as ſome Men have been found to do upon other Occaſions; yet *no* ſuch Thing could, at any time or in any wiſe, be proved againſt *them*. And though Men may, as they are too frequently apt to do, agree together to teſtify a Falſity, for ſome private ſecular Views; yet *no* ſuch Agreement hath ever been diſcovered againſt the *Evangeliſts* and *Apoſtles*; who were poor, mean, Men, having no civil Intereſt, or Proſpect of temporal Gain, to influence their Accounts.

Accounts. Though the Things, related by the *Evangeliſts* and *Apoſtles*, rely upon *Hiſtorical* or *Traditionary* Evidence; And though we have not the Evidence, which thoſe Perſons and their Cotemporaries had, to challenge our Aſſent to the *Scripture-Account* of Things; yet the Deficiency, in this Point, is otherwiſe happily made good. Not to particularize on the wonderful Preſervation of the Goſpel againſt Malice and Power, and the no leſs ſurprizing Progreſs and Diffuſion of its Doctrines by the Apoſtles Means, thro' moſt Parts of the *Roman Empire* to the Limits of *Parthia and India*, in the Space of 30 or 40 Years after the Death of Chriſt; We have the Opinions and Reaſonings of many *ſober*, *learned* and *impartial*, Authors concerning the Veracity of Scripture-Revelation. What therefore can it be, but an almoſt *irreſiſtible* Prejudice, that keeps Men from the Chriſtian Faith?

The *Scriptures* are ſtanding *Records* of Things, and have been convey'd to us through all Ages from the Times of the *Apoſtles*. They were the ſame at firſt with thoſe we now have, as is evident from the Authority

of *Primitive Hiſtorians*, ſome of *whom* (if I remember aright) averr, not *improbably*, that they had ſeen the *Genuine* Copies of the *Apoſtles* Writings. For, with Deference to better Judges, Why might not thoſe Writings be really extant in the Times of the *Primitive Hiſtorians*; as well as the Hand-Writing of *Tully Cicero*, or any other known Writer, in the Days of *Quinctilian*? a Point, which but few *Critics* deny. The *Scriptures* were ſoon after their firſt Publication *tranſlated* into the ſeveral Languages of the World, and diſperſed among all Nations, as appears from the Authority of *Tertullian*, and to this Time have been wonderfully preſerved. Though the Conceits of ſome induced them to aſſert; That *the Scriptures are not entire, and that ſeveral Books of the Old Teſtament are loſt, having periſhed through Accidents, or rather the Malice of Time*; yet we have the agreeing Opinion of many learned Authors, that the *Legal*, *Hiſtorical* and *Prophetical*, Parts of the *Old Teſtament*, have been providentially preſerved *ſacred* and *incorrupt*. Nor has the Providence of God been leſs *viſible* in the Conſervation of the Books of the *New Teſta-*

Teſtament. Theſe Books, tho' handed down to us thro' numberleſs Tranſcribers and Copiers, have ſuffered leſs Alteration than any antient Writings extant in the World; and, conſequently, muſt have leſs to anſwer for upon that Account.

But, as it is mentioned that the Scriptures have been providentially preſerved *ſacred* and *incorrupt*, ſome will object that *they have been corrupted, and that the Advocates for thoſe Writings have no juſt Matter of Boaſt.* Were ſuch like Objections true, or founded on Matter of Fact; then they would have ſome Reaſon to pity the Weakneſs, Abſurdity and Deluſion, of Chriſtians. Now, If the *Scriptures* had ever been *corrupted*, as ſome would perſuade us, then the *Jewiſh* Tranſlations muſt have been *corrupted* alſo. But very many Authors are *unanimous*, that the *Jews* were ſuch exact Copiers and *Textuaries*, that nothing could be either *omitted* or *added*, without being diſcovered by them. *Beſides*, If the Scriptures had ever been corrupted; then the *Prophecies* [a] concerning the Birth, Life, Death,

[a] See Biſhop *Hall*'s Paſſion Sermon. *Nelſon*'s Feſt. and Faſts, *p.* 290. *&c.* Bp. of *Lond. Paſt. Care.*

Reſurrection and Aſcenſion of the ὁ ἐρχόμενος or *Meſſiah*, could not have correſponded. All the Prophecies of the *Old Teſtament* center'd exactly in the Perſon of Chriſt, the promiſed and long expected *Meſſiah*, and were afterwards punctually fulfilled in Him.. The Time, for the Conſummation of thoſe *Prophecies*, is long ſince expired, and *no* other Perſon hath as yet appeared, to whom they might with ſo much Strictneſs of Reaſon and *Juſtice* be apply'd. *None but a* Jew *of the Houſe of David, now almoſt extinct, could, with any Appearance of Truth, profeſs himſelf to be the Son of God*; None, but who was intimately privy to the Will of God, or rather God himſelf, could poſſibly inſtitute ſuch a Religion, as that of Chriſtians.

What hath been advanced concerning the Truth of the Chriſtian Revelation, is ſubmitted to the Judgment of *candid* and *impartial* Enquirers after Truth. As for thoſe who have been inſtructed in the Principles of the *Chriſtian Faith*; it is their *Province*, not to reſt ſatisfy'd with the *bare*, or an *implicit*, Belief of *Chriſtianity*, *becauſe* educated in a Country where it has been received and well entertain'd. On the

the contrary, they muſt, as their *reſpective* Callings will permit, examine *maturely* and *deliberately* into the Merits of the Cauſe they would eſpouſe, *ſearching the Scriptures*, according to the *generous* and *gracious* Command of Chriſt. They muſt not take Things by Piece-meal; but compare one Text with another, weigh one Reaſon with another, and have well-diſpoſed Minds to acquieſce with the Truth of Things. By ſuch Means as theſe, they will be capacitated to aſſign Reaſons for their Faith. Nay, an honeſt and earneſt Enquiry into the Reaſons and Precepts of the Chriſtian Religion will teach them to *ſubdue* their own *naturally* corrupt Affections, and *direct* them in the Path of Virtue; it will *create* in their Minds a profound Veneration for God, and a moſt intenſe Degree of Gratitude towards him, their Creator and Preſerver; and, in a Word, will *give* them a Proſpect of that *Felicity*, which they can no where enjoy on this ſide *Heaven*.

FINIS.

17 JUN 06